



News Release

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SALT SPRING ISLAND HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT RELEASED

Salt Spring Island — A recently completed housing needs assessment confirms that the lack of affordable housing on Salt Spring Island is affecting virtually all segments of the population. The most urgent need is housing for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.

The study shows that the cost of the available supply of housing in 2008 was at least double that which a household earning a median income could afford. Although housing prices declined somewhat in 2009, a significant gap still exists between housing prices and income levels.

Other key findings include:

- Seniors, families with children, single parent families, single people, couples and youth are all affected by the lack of affordable housing.
- A serious shortfall exists in the supply of housing for people with special needs, and those who need supports for daily living are often falling between the cracks.
- The number of homeless people is increasing.
- The majority of those who accessed the community shelter during extreme weather already have housing – but it is uninhabitable in very cold weather.
- Rental housing is in short supply and is often expensive and in poor condition.
- The lack of affordable housing contributes to labour shortages and declining school enrolments, as families with children leave the island in search of more affordable options.

“The needs assessment confirms that there’s an affordable housing crisis in our community,” said local trustee George Ehring. “It’s a sobering study that highlights the real need to address affordable housing issues on the island.”

“We’re moving forward to work with housing advocates to create and implement a Community Affordable Housing Strategy,” local trustee Christine Torgrimson said. “We must all work together to effectively address this crucial community need. We’ve already held one very productive session with key people, and we will be working with others and the community as a whole in the coming months to set priorities and ultimately increase our successes,” she said.

An affordable housing strategy will identify priorities for action, develop implementation plans, and establish provisions for monitoring and evaluating outcomes. Areas for further investigation include legalizing suites and cottages, amending land use regulations to enable the development of more affordable housing, as well as other options.

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Preserving **island** communities, culture and environment

Bowen, Denman, Hornby, Gabriola, Galiano, Gambier, Lasqueti, Mayne, N. Pender, Salt Spring, Saturna, S. Pender, Thetis

The study was conducted in two phases by Janis Gauthier of JG Consulting. Phase I provided a statistical analysis of island demographics, incomes and housing prices. Phase II consulted key community stakeholders including service agencies, employers, non-profit housing providers, and prospective funders to discuss and confirm the findings of Phase I. Recommendations for further action are also made.

The study received funding from both the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia and the Capital Regional District. The affordable housing initiatives of the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee complement the Trust-wide program to address affordable housing through Trust Council's Community Housing Task Force.

Janis Gauthier presented the completed needs assessment to the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee at its meeting on February 4, 2010.

Copies of the Islands Trust Housing Needs Assessment are available in the Islands Trust Salt Spring office and on the Islands Trust website: <http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/lc/SS/default.cfm>.

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